

**Remarks by Chargé d'Affaires Brian C. Aggeler**

Transfer of Responsibility Event

August 19, 2011 10:30 am

Ministry of Defense, Skopje

Minister Besimi, Mr. Dimitriev, Mr. Esmerov, Colonel Velkov, ladies and gentlemen. I am so pleased to join you today to celebrate the transfer of responsibility for the Macedonian Infrastructure and Enterprise Services Upgrade project from the United States to the Republic of Macedonia. This important event provides us an opportunity to again reaffirm the close ties and strong partnership between our two countries.

This joint project of nearly six million dollars has been supported by U.S. Foreign Military Financing funds in order to assist the Ministry of Defense and Army in their defense transformation and modernization efforts. This program provides Macedonia with a system that is fully interoperable and compatible with NATO standards. And this handover of responsibility is another significant step toward its full implementation.

I understand that at a recent conference in Brussels, other NATO members were so impressed with Macedonia's efforts that they have asked for lessons learned as they work to modernize their own systems!

Now that the system has gone "live," over 250 workstations and laptops are providing connectivity between logistics management sites and offices throughout the Ministry and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia. Almost 300 users have received training on the system and more than 900 personnel now have real-time logistics visibility and access through this system.

I'd like to highlight the excellent cooperation between the representatives in the Ministry of Defense, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, and particularly our Overseas Defense Cooperation Office, and our friends at Hewlett-Packard. The efforts of all those involved have been essential in achieving the outstanding success we mark today.

Now that we have turned over a fully functioning system with trained personnel, the U.S. role shifts to one of support. As you assume responsibility for this project, its future success will depend on full implementation of all its capabilities throughout the Army. This investment in the modernization of your military will also rely on the development of a long-term plan for its sustainability to reap its rewards. And I am confident in the Ministry of Defense's ability – under the leadership of Minister Besimi - to fully utilize and sustain this system over the coming years.

Indeed, it is clear that Minister Besimi brings great leadership to this ministry, not only in terms of these important technical issues but in terms of a greater vision for the future. For example, by paying tribute to soldiers killed in the 2001 armed conflict as he recently did, the minister took a significant step in promoting this country's interethnic harmony, and we applaud his ongoing efforts.

Again, congratulations on all you have already accomplished, and good luck in the future phases of this project and your other endeavors.

Thank you.